

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

INFO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 191037

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: HO, ES, GT, PFOR, PBOR, OAS

SUBJECT: SECOND MEETING OF CONSULTATION ON SALVADORAN/
HONDURAN BORDER DISPUTE

REF: 1) GUATEMALA 5397 (NOTAL) 2) GUATEMALA 5417 (NOTAL)
3) TEGUCIGALPA 3694 (NOTAL), 4) STATE 190434

1. AMBASSADOR SEVILLA-SACASA ACTING AS PRESIDENT OF THE
COMMITTEE OF SEVEN REQUESTED A SUNDAY (AUGUST 1) MEETING
OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL ACTING AS COMMITTEE OF CONSULTA-
TION UNDER ARTICLE 59 OF THE CHARTER. THIS REQUEST WAS
BASED ON A COMMUNICATION FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF
HONDURAS TO SEVILLA-SACASA ACCUSING EL SALVADOR OF LAUNCH-
ING AN ATTACK ON HONDURAN TERRITORY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
VALLE.

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2. AT THE MEETING OF CONSULTATION SEVILLA-SACASA READ THE COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONDURAN FOREIGN MINISTER. SEVERAL DELEGATES STRESSED THE SENSITIVITY OF THE SITUATION AND URGED ALL SPEED IN MOVING THE OAS OBSERVERS INTO PLACE. IT WAS REPORTED THAT OBSERVERS FROM GUATEMALA, NICARAGUA, COSTA RICA AND ARGENTINA WERE ALREADY EITHER IN THE TROUBLED AREA OR ENROUTE. US AND ECUADOR ASSURED THE COMMITTEE THAT THEIR OBSERVERS WOULD ARRIVE SHORTLY.

3. THE HONDURAN REPRESENTATIVE THEN TOOK THE FLOOR AND SAID THAT HE HAD AUTHORIZATION TO STATE THAT THE HONDURAS/ SALVADOR BORDER WAS NOW COMPLETELY TRANQUIL. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE HONDURAN REPRESENTATIVE KNEW THAT HIS FOREIGN MINISTER HAD OVERREACTED AND THAT HONDURAS DID NOT HAVE THE FACTS TO BACK UP ITS ACCUSATION.

4. THE SALVADORAN REPRESENTATIVE ANGRILY ASSERTED THAT HE HAD AUTHORIZATION TO CHARACTERIZE THE CHARGES CONTAINED IN THE HONDURAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S TELEGRAM AS "COMPLETELY AND ABSOLUTELY FALSE".

6. SEVILLA-SACASA POURED OIL ON THE TROUBLED WATERS IN A LENGTHY SPEECH AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL (ALVARADO OF PERU) DID HIS BEST TO BRING THE MEETING TO A SPEEDY CONCLUSION. THE HONDURAN REPRESENTATIVE, HOWEVER, FELT IT NECESSARY TO RESPOND TO THE SALVADORAN. HE CATEGORICALLY REJECTED THE IMPLICIT SALVADORAN CHARGE OF WRONGDOING STATING THAT "HONDURANS WERE NOT IN THE HABIT OF LYING".

7. THE FINAL WORD WAS LEFT TO THE SALVADORAN WHO STATED THAT "HE HOPED THE HONDURAN TELEGRAM WAS THE RESULT OF A MISTAKEN REPORT FROM THE FRONTIER". HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING SUCH REPORTS BECAUSE OF THE TENDENCY THEY HAD TO OVERHEAT THE SITUATION. HE FINISHED BY ASSERTING THAT THE BEST WAY TO CONFIRM THAT THIS REPORT WAS AN UNFORTUNATE MISTAKE AND NOT A DELIBERATE MANEUVER WAS TO WAIT AND SEE IF A PRESS CAMPAIGN OF VILIFICATION AGAINST EL SALVADOR APPEARED IN THE HONDURAN PRESS.

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8. COMMENT: THIS UNFORTUNATE EXCHANGE RESULTED FROM SEVILLA-SACASA'S INSISTENCE ON CALLING A MEETING THAT HAD NO REAL PURPOSE. THE MEETING PLACED HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR IN A POSITION WHERE THEY COULD ONLY ATTACK ONE ANOTHER. IT WAS OBVIOUS TO MOST OBSERVERS THAT THE COMMUNICATION FROM HONDURAN FOREIGN MINISTER WAS BASED ON A FRAGMENTARY

REPORT AND DESIGNED TO PLACE EL SALVADOR IN A POSITION
OF HAVING BROKEN THE PEACE. BY ASKING FOR CONFIRMATION
AND WAITING THE WHOLE MATTER COULD HAVE BEEN FORGOTTEN.

9. DURING THE DEBATE, SEVILLA-SACASA MADE THE FLAT
PREDICTION THAT WITHIN THREE WEEKS FOREIGN MINISTERS OF
SALVADOR AND HONDURAS WOULD BE ENGAGED IN SERIOUS
NEGOTIATIONS. HOW HE REACHED THAT CONCLUSION OR HOW IT RE-
LATED TO HIS DECISION TO CALL THE MEETING IS NOT APPARENT
FROM HERE. HABIB

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